DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 336 172 PS 019 342

TITLE	Facts about Child Care. NCJW Center for the Child Fact Sheet Number 3.
INSTITUTION	National Council of Jewish Women, New York, NY. Center for the Child.
PUB DATE	Feb 89
NOTE	3p.
AVAILABLE FROM	National Council of Jewish Women, Center for the Child, 53 West 23rd Street, New York, NY 10010.
PUB TYPE	Reports - General (140)
EDRS PRICE	MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	*Day Care; Early Childhood Education; *Educational Quality; *Employed Parents; *State Federal Aid
IDENTIFIERS	Fact Sheets

ABSTRACT

Some may believe that most married women do not really need to work; that nonmaternal care is bad for children; that the government is already spending a lot on child care; that the so-called child care crisis is not society's problem, but the parents' problem; and that interventions by the federal government will solve the child care problem. They are mistaken. Economic necessity goads most married women who work. The quality of care children receive is more important than who provides that care. The only source of direct child care assistance to parents from the federal government is funds distributed to states through the Title XX Social Services Block Grant, which has been severely cut over the past 8 years. The child care problems of working parents are also the problems of society, because the long-term social costs of inadequate care for the next generation will have negative consequences for all. While the federal government can provide much needed leadership and some financial support, solutions to the child care problem will only be found through coordinated public-private initiatives at the local level that are responsive to the community's needs. (RH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 306172

Facts About Child Care

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

MYTH #1: Most married women don't really need to work.

REALITY: Most married women work out of economic necessity. Times have changed. The majority of today's families rely on two incomes to achieve and maintain a middle class standard of living, and a significant number of families need two incomes just to pull themselves above the poverty line. From 1979 to 1986, the earning power of husbands decreased by an average of 4% in constant dollars, increasing the economic pressure for the average married woman to join the paid labor force.

Young families, in particular, now depend on two paychecks to get by. When adjusted for inflation, the average earnings for young male workers (age 20-24) in 1986 were 26% less than earnings by the same age group 13 years earlier, leaving many young married women with no choice but to work. Moreover, work experience increases women's earning potential as insurance against economic hardship for themselves and their children in the event of divorce -- the odds of which are more than one in three for couples with dependent children.

MYTH #2: Non-maternal care is bad for children.

REALITY: The quality of care children receive is more important than who provides that care -- mother, father, grandmother, or paid caregiver. Most research shows that children in non-maternal care do just as well as children cared for exclusively by their mothers, as long as the quality of care is high. The basic ingredients of high quality child care are:

- **Small group size and a high caregiver/child ratio**, ensuring opportunities for individualized adult-child interaction and adequate supervision.
- **Continuity of caregivers**, allowing children to develop strong and stable relationships with the adults who care for them.
- **Caregivers who respond appropriately and effectively to the emotional and developmental needs of children in their care.**
- **Effective communication between caregivers and parents.**
- **A safe and stimulating environment** that promotes the physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development of children.

Ensuring high quality care is particularly difficult and expensive in the case of infants who require more individualized attention than older children. The prevalence of less than adequate infant day care in the United States may well explain recently reported research findings that non-maternal care during the first year of a child's life sometimes has negative impacts on children. Such findings underscore the importance of ensuring high quality child care for the sake of our children and society.

PS 018042

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Chaya S. Piotrkowski
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

MYTH #3: The government is already spending a lot on child care.

REALITY: The only source of direct child care assistance to parents from the Federal government are funds distributed to states through the Title XX Social Services Block Grant, which has been severely cut over the past eight years.

Cuts in Title XX funding have coincided with increases in the number of children living in poverty and in need of subsidized care. Indeed, lack of affordable child care has become a major obstacle for single mothers trying to move from welfare to work and a major cause of poverty among working parents. Across the United States, hundreds of thousands of low income families eligible for Title XX subsidies are unserved because of a lack of government funds. For example, the Children's Defense Fund estimates that fewer than 10% of California's 1.1 million eligible children can be served given current funding levels.

The Dependent Care Tax Credit is the most important source of indirect governmental assistance for child care; however, it provides little or no help to lower incomes families. The Dependent Care Tax Credit is only refundable up to the amount of a family's tax liability. The credit is worthless to families in the lowest income brackets who pay no taxes, and the full benefit is only realized by families well above the poverty line.

There is virtually no Federal investment, and very little investment by state and local governments, in systematic efforts to develop the supply of high quality child care services in the United States. While government actively seeks to develop high quality elementary and secondary educational systems through investment in human resources, materials, and facilities, it invests almost nothing in the development of high quality child care services which play an increasingly prominent role in the early education of this country's children.

MYTH #4: The so-called "child care crisis" is not society's problem, but the parents' problem.

REALITY: The child care problems of working parents are also the problems of society, because the long-term social costs of inadequate care of the next generation will have negative consequences for us all.

Inadequate care of young children, by either parents or paid caregivers, is strongly linked to later social maladjustment, school failure and dropout, delinquency, crime, and economic dependence in adult life. If we allow today's children to be placed at risk, we also risk our nation's future. Now that the majority of mothers with young children must work to help maintain their families, there is an urgent need for good, safe, and affordable child care. Just as our nation invests in public education, we must now invest in the development of child care services that not only ensure children's physical well-being, but also actively promote social competence and cognitive development.

MYTH #5: Federal government intervention will solve our child care problems.

REALITY: While the Federal government can provide much needed leadership and some financial support, solutions will only be found through coordinated public-private initiatives at the local level that are responsive to each community's specific needs.

©National Council of Jewish Women, Center for the Child, 53 West 23rd Street, NY, NY 10010, (212) 645-4048.
Material from this fact sheet may be quoted freely with proper citation: NCJW Center for the Child, NY,NY.
Copies available in bulk from the address above.